

# **Критический взгляд на концепции «Глобальный Юг» и «Кооперации Юг-Юг»**

## **For a critical appraisal of the concepts “Global South” and “South-South Cooperation”**

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*Аннотация:* В статье предлагается история концепций "Глобальный Юг" и "Кооперации Юг-Юг" и высказывается предположение, что они постепенно отходят от критических смыслов и обещаний трансформации мировой системы и международной арены. Будучи модным понятием в международных дебатах и имея неопределенное географическое/геополитическое происхождение, "Глобальный Юг" ассоциируется или делит пространство с другими, еще более расплывчатыми идеями, такими как "развивающиеся страны" и "страны с формирующимся рынком". Для краткой истории этого понятия будет интересно проследить, как на протяжении всей глобальной истории (с момента ее возникновения) идеи, которые служили для названия примерно того же географического пространства, которое сегодня соответствует Глобальному Югу. В статье отстаивается тезис о том, что среди всех уже разработанных альтернатив понятия

"центр/периферия" и "зависимость" обладают наибольшим критическим и эмансипационным

*Ключевые слова:* глобальный Юг, кооперация Юг-Юг, глобальная периферия, международные отношения, история концепций

*Abstract:* The article proposes a history of the concepts of “Global South” and “South-South Cooperation” and suggests that it has been progressively moving away from critical meanings and promises of transformation of the world system and the international arena. A fashionable concept in the international debate and of vague geographical/geopolitical origin, “Global South” has been associated or sharing space with other ideas that are even vaguer than it, such as “developing countries” and “emerging countries”. To make this brief history of the concept, it will be interesting to map ideas throughout a global history (since it began to exist) that have served to name roughly the same geographical space that today corresponds to the Global South. The article defends the thesis that, among all the alternatives that have already been developed, the notions of “center/periphery” and “dependency” are the ones with the greatest critical and emancipatory potential.

*Keywords:* Global South; South-South Cooperation; Global Periphery; International Relations, History of the Concepts

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This article presents suggestions for a genealogy of the ideas of “Global South” and “South-South Cooperation”, so fashionables in international debates in recent decades. Much is said about “South” and “cooperation” in the global arena, with “North-South” relations and cooperation predominating in this issue – through the actions of international institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), of states at the center of the World System, or of transnational NGOs. From this tendency, either as a complement or as an alternative, proposals of relations and cooperation between agents of the so-called “Global South” have emerged as an element of narrowing the euphemistically called international “asymmetries”.

I propose to give a brief history of the idea of the “Global South” and “South-South Cooperation”, and to suggest that it has been progressively moving away from critical meanings and promises of transformation of the world system and the international arena. A fashionable concept in the international debate and of vague geographical/geopolitical origin, “Global South” has been associated or sharing space with other ideas that are even vaguer than it, such as “developing countries” and “emerging countries”. To make this brief history of the concept, it will be interesting to map ideas throughout a global history (since it began to exist) that have served to name roughly the same geographical space that today corresponds to the Global South. I will try to systematize the moments when these ideas emerged, and whether they originated in Europe/the West or in the “South” itself. With this exercise, I want to defend the thesis that, among all the alternatives that have already been developed, the notions of “center/periphery” and “dependency” are the ones with the greatest critical and emancipatory potential. It would be worth thinking about the reasons for the near abandonment of these notions, which have submerged to give way to notions that confuse more than explain.

At this point, it is important to make some clarifications. First, the proposal of this article is to investigate the history of two ideas, hence “Global South” and “South-South Cooperation”. In this exercise I give special attention to the “pre-history” of the concept: other concepts that in this time were useful to nominate approximately the same geopolitical space, to question at what point the mentioned concept became more useful than other alternatives and to essay some suggestions to understand this turn. Second, one of the intentions of the article is to emphasize the political (not descriptive or “technical”) creation or emergence of the concept, to emphasize its element of “invention”, “creation” – a relational and polarized invention of supranational identities like “Africa”, “Latin America”, “Global South” and so on. Particularly, is important to understand that in some moments “Global South” became an interesting concept, and that became possible to think about a “South-South cooperation”, a collaborative cooperation between actors from the “South”.

#### The “South” as an invention of the “North”?

It is important to take note since the beginning of these reflections that we are dealing mainly and more strictly with the development of the concept of a “Global South” and a “South-South cooperation” – specially in written versions and at the political international arena. Meanwhile, the idea of a political, economic, cultural, and geopolitical space that is peripheral at the world system is older (under other nomenclatures), and we will not ignore this in our reflections. Ideas like colonial peoples, underdeveloped countries, dependency, and so on are the basis for the more recent notions of “South” and “South-South relations and cooperation”. We can see a (probably not exhaustive) list in the table below:

Table 1: The names of the “South”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: own creation.

Concepts	Creation	Creator
Indies (East and West)	15th,16th century	Europeans: explorers (Christopher Columbus)
Savages	16th,17th century	Europeans: philosophers (Thomas More, Michel de Montaigne), writers (William Shakespeare's The Tempest)
Colonies (modern ones), colonized	16th,17th century	Europeans: colonizers, Colonial Empires
Backward countries	19th century	Karl Marx, Marxism
Semicolonial countries	1917	Vladimir Lenin, Communist International (Third International)
East (Socialist Block)	Post-Second World War	Winston Churchill, Harry Truman, NATO
Underdeveloped	1949	Truman
Developing countries	1950's	ECLAC (Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado)
Traditional societies	1950's and 1960's	Modernization Theories (Walt Rostow), Alliance for Progress (John Kennedy)
Third World	1952	Alfred Sauvy
Non-Aligned	1950,1955,1961	Bandung Conference, Non-Aligned Movement
Neocolonial countries	1965	Kwame Nkrumah, Rodolfo Stavenhagen
Dependents / Global Periphery	1960's	Dependency theorists (André Gunder Frank, Ruy Mauro Marini, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Samir Amin, Walter Rodney)
Post-colonial	1970's	Post-colonial theorists (Edward Said, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, V. Y. Mudimbe, Gayatri Spivak)
Global South	1969, 1980, 1990	Carl Oglesby, Willy Brandt, The South Commission (Julius Nyerere)

This framework above brings together concepts formulated from the moment Western Europe (and later North America) became the global hegemonic force – and when something like a “global” system began to emerge. From then on, Eurocentric notions about other peoples of the world began to impose themselves globally, in a way that was more and more unavoidable even for people who were named by those notions. But we can consider that, although these concepts are often initially “creations” of the North, even in these cases they have ended up being taken over and re-signified by the South – transforming them into “self-identification” (sometimes positive) identities.

In this sense, the search for identity marks the intellectuality of the called Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, Asia, and East (the “global periphery”, today the “Global South”) from the beginning. It is our intellectual dilemma, the intellectual dilemma of the peripheries between being as the center or being as ourselves, as Eduardo Devés<sup>2</sup> observes. In this way, the uses and disputes around these concepts are crossed by scientific-philosophical reflections and by ideology. So, the notion of “gnosis” used by the Congolese philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe assumes a greater relevance and applicability than the author suggested in his classical book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (1988). Just as one can speak of an “African gnosis, that is, both the scientific and ideological discourse on Africa”<sup>3</sup>, we can refer to, for example, a Latin American or a Global South gnosis.

This African gnosis “is sometimes African by virtue of its authors and promoters, but which extends to a Western epistemological territory”<sup>4</sup>. It is more Western because it is thought from Western categories (philosophical, anthropological), and in non-African languages. Would this have to be overcome by an epistemological shift? Mudimbe wonders: “Is it possible to consider this shift outside of the very epistemological field which makes my question both possible and thinkable?” In short, a classic problem of intellectual

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<sup>2</sup> Devés, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Mudimbe, 1988, P. 187.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 186.

production in the periphery. Mudimbe notes that «we are dealing with ideology. Modern African thought seems somehow to be basically a product of the West. What is more, since most African leaders and thinkers have received a Western education, their thought is at the crossroads of Western epistemological filiation and African ethnocentrism. Moreover, many concepts and categories underpinning this ethnocentrism are inventions of the West. When prominent leaders such as [Léopold] Senghor or [Julius] Nyerere propose to synthesize liberalism and socialism, idealism, and materialism, they know that they are transplanting Western intellectual Manicheism»<sup>5</sup>.

The notable Palestinian literary critic Edward Said even argued explicitly (more explicitly than Mudimbe) in his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978) that notions such as “America”, “the West” or “Islam” should be combated, because they bring together under reductionist identities individuals who are extremely different from each other. In this study, which clearly inspired Mudimbe's later approach to the invention of Africa by Europe, Said emphasized that the formation of the idea of the Orient is due to Europe (the West), as a form of self-identification and the constitution of its superiority in opposition to the former. He also highlighted the formation and importance of “Orientalism” (and the novels, studies, university departments and travelers associated with it) as an element that consolidated this binary opposition.

Mudimbe's and Said's approaches are reach and interesting, but do not solve the following problems for the analyst: 1) these “inventions” of the North are creatively “reinvented” by the South, and there are some concepts that are initiatives from the South since the beginning, i.e., Mudimbe and Said probably exaggerate the agency of the North in their works; 2) these political and cultural identities, these discourses that are intended to be understood and overcome by the two authors are still alive, strongly alive. If “Africa” or “Orient” were in a large way heteronomous inventions (like “Latin America” or the notion of “South”), they were assumed by the “colonized”, the “subaltern”, the “Eastern”, the “Southern”. Those notions were recreated and inverted in some moment and became self-identifications

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., P. 185.

– and sometimes positive ones. In certain contexts, they assumed progressive, egalitarian, and revolutionary meanings.

The Indian intellectual Vijay Prashad, in his *The darker nations – a people's history of the third world* (2007), presents interesting arguments that serve as a counterpoint to that negative view of huge collective identities, in particular nationalisms and “Panisms”. He emphasizes (to some extent echoing Mudimbe and Said) that a notion like the “Third World” is a project, an idea – rather than a place. However, projects like these are not just impositions from the North: they are largely agencies of the South. And they can be assumed to be projects of autonomation, of liberation – as is evident with the notion of the “Third World” or “non-alignment” at the time. Prashad emphasizes the progressive and “enlightened” character of Third World nationalisms, which he presents (following Benedict Anderson's brilliant studies) as distinct creations in relation to European nationalisms. For Prashad, they were constituted by the national liberation movements as “internationalist nationalisms”, “secularist”, “anti-racist” and “plurilingual”. It wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s that new versions of essentialist nationalisms (religious, racist, culturalist) took hold, following the decline of the Third World project itself. It is in this more hostile context that the project of a “Global South” is imposed, and it is with it that it must coexist – including the new bourgeois classes of the global peripheries associated with financial capitalism, created in the decades of national liberation and Third-Worldism, and now broken with the class alliances and interventionist states that fueled them.

We can always hope to overcome “generalized” (sometimes “essentialized”) identities and Panisms like Negritude, Pan-Africanism, Latin-Americanism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Asianism, or Global South by “universal”, “cosmopolitical” or “humanistic” approaches. But despite this, the Pan-Africanisms, Latin-Americanisms, Négritudes, Latinités and Indigenismos go on and on, like words and things, like myths and realities. We continue to think of binarisms as autochthonous/cosmopolitan, East/West, black/white, South/North, because they refer to things, to very concrete things, like oppressions, dominations, colonialities, and racisms. Finally, the division between North and South is because for centuries the North has developed



and become the “North” at the expense of exploiting what it has transformed into the South.

Identities produced as a reaction to that domination are very concrete. There is a “South” (in singular) if there is a “North”. But there are also different “Souths” (in plural), very different between them, and they are basically disconnected. The problems and relations of the Souths are mainly with the North. But the Souths have one very important thing in common. They are seen historically as the same thing: they are the barbarians, the savages, the inferiors, the colonials, the underdeveloped, the Third World, the Non-Aligned, the peripheral. This is a huge basis to develop and reinforce the other side of this “identity coin”. And this deals with a very real international dependency: economic, geopolitical, epistemic. Therefore, we must work as a unity at the global arena because we are seen as a unity (an inferior otherness), and because we occupy a particular place at the World-System<sup>6</sup>.

Global South and South-South Cooperation: what we are talking about?

The concept of Global South seemed to be “created” in the contemporary sense in 1969 by Carl Oglesby, an USA’s leftist activist. In the 1970’s the concept began to enter in circulation at the epistemic community of International Politics and between international agents and staffs, especially at the United Nations, in UNCTAD – in initiatives such as the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and the organization of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (occurred in Buenos Aires in 1978).

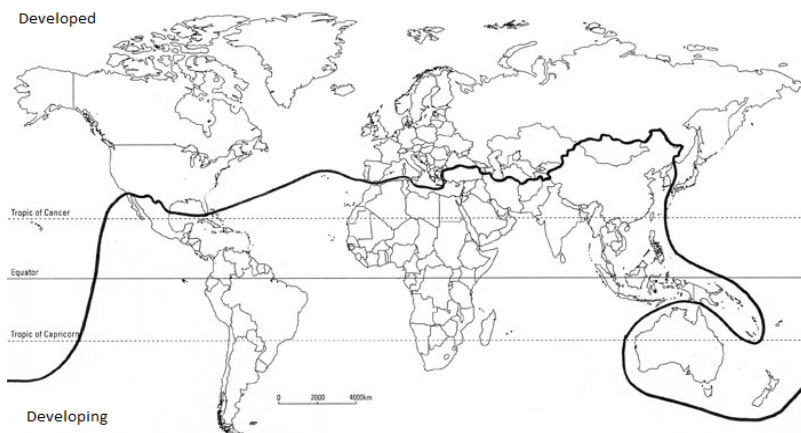
The adoption of the idea of a “Global South” encompassed or overcame the notions of “underdevelopment”, “Third World”, “non-alignment”, or “periphery”. Above all, it goes beyond the notion that was central at the time of the Third World (created by the French progressive activist Albert Sauvy in 1952, but immediately appropriated by intellectuals, activists, and the elites of the new formally

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<sup>6</sup> Wallerstein, 2004.

independent states). The strengthening of its conceptual counterpart (the other pole of the dichotomy), the idea of a “Global North”, was dialectically central to its expansion. One can point to two important moments in this process. For the assumption of the notion of a “North”, one can mention the foundation in 1977 of the Independent Commission for International Development Affairs (the so-called “Brandt Commission” because of its president, the former West German social-democratic prime minister Willy Brandt), and the publication of its first report in 1980 – which advocated overcoming North-South inequalities. In this report, became famous the presentation of a geographical line dividing North and South, named since then the “Brandt Line”, as we can see in the figure below:

Figure 1: The Brandt Line



Source: Brandt, 1980.

In turn, as to the idea of the “South”, and as a response to the reinforcement of the notion of North, one can highlight the constitution of the South Commission (chaired by Julius Nyerere, the former president of Tanzania) in 1987, by the initiative of leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement, especially the prime minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad with a meeting organized in Kuala Lumpur by the Third World Foundation and the Malaysian Institute of Strategic and International Studies. Later, the publication of its report in 1990

with the collaboration of the most relevant critical intellectuals of the South<sup>7</sup>.

In this sense, the concept of Global South is in some measure an invention of the North – but since the beginning appropriated by the South. Global South seems to be more neutral, and less hierarchical than other older correlates. But the World-System is hierarchical. So, Global South sometimes sounds like a euphemistic concept, like “asymmetries”. But “developing”, and “in development” (and consequently “emerging countries”) are worst as alternatives, because more than euphemistic they are fallacious for most of the world: one world entirely developed is intrinsically impossible. The center underdeveloped and underdevelops the periphery – we have “underdeveloped” and “underdeveloping”, as Roberto Fernández Retamar<sup>8</sup> said. One country eventually can have success in its development (depending on what we define as “development”), but not the entire world. The alternatives to this are ideas as “delinking” (as proposed by Samir Amin<sup>9</sup>) of the World-System.

On the other hand, “South-South cooperation” can be defined as the cooperative association of countries from the called “Global South”, aiming at developing and obtaining greater political space in the international system and greater autonomy in relation to the “Global North”<sup>10</sup>. Who can be considered an agent of cooperation is a question of debate. Some authors exclude from these relations private investments and commercial relations, restricting the concept to the political sphere, considering that market agents cannot be considered cooperative. On the other hand, others include the participation of “civil society” agents, such as NGOs and transnational networks of social movements and associations, as well as local state agents.

In any case, as occurs in every debate on international relations, most of the literature shows a predilection for the actions of national state agents, an emphasis on bilateral or trilateral relations between

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<sup>7</sup> The South Commission, 1990, Prashad, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Fernández Retamar, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Amin, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> Lechini, 2009.

states, and regional integration instruments as the privileged and established spaces for international cooperation. In this hegemonic understanding, South-South Cooperation would be built notably after the 1955 Asian-African Conference (which went down in history as the Bandung Conference), launching new candidates to become actors and even protagonists in the international arena. But all with the same nature: states and institutions of regional integration.

In this sense, we can understand the concept as a collective construction of intellectuals, policymakers, and diplomatic bodies from the Global South to the extent that it is difficult to pinpoint a precise authorship and origin of the term. As Enara Echart<sup>11</sup> suggests, and even though much of the specialized literature does not recognize it, South-South Cooperation takes place not only between states but also between business agents, social movement networks, subnational state agents, and international agencies. The concept is also built – we may add – from networks of intellectuals from the South, notably those dedicated to the debates on the international arena, on the concept of “development” and on the epistemic dependence that crosses the production of science and technology and the international circulation of knowledge.

To understand the emergence of the concept, it is necessary to address other notions from which it derives, such as “International Development Cooperation” (and “International Development Assistance”). The beginning of the so-called “International Development Cooperation” can be found in the inauguration speech of the USA’s president Harry Truman in 1949, in which he assumed as one of the goals of his government the resolution of the problems of “underdeveloped areas” of the globe. The notion of “underdevelopment” was thus introduced in the international arena, largely based on the reflections of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It is important to note that implicit in that notion was also the thesis that “underdeveloped” countries could become “developed”. In this way, they could be understood as “developing” countries, following a so-called “development process”, in an evolutionist and even teleological under-

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<sup>11</sup> Echart, 2016.

standing of development – sometimes intertwined with the “modernization theories” then in evidence (like Rostow<sup>12</sup>).

Therefore, International Development Cooperation can be understood as a policy of the “developed” capitalist countries to keep the “underdeveloped” in the capitalist orbit, in the context of advancing capitalism/socialism polarization of the Cold War. Initially, this set of relationships was called “assistance”. It was not until the late 1950s that the notion of “cooperation” began to impose itself to name them. As from the deepening of the realization that there was an “asymmetry” in the international system, initiatives originating from the “developed countries” to help the underdeveloped ones became more recurrent. Finally, an initiative such as the Alliance for Progress (1961), designed by John F. Kennedy’s administration for cooperation with Latin America in counterpoint to Soviet aid to Cuba (then recently declared a socialist country), can be understood as paradigmatic in this sense.

However, much less collaboration and mutual support can be observed among the “underdeveloped” themselves. There were (and are) comparatively few resources available to them, less state capacity, and a relative lack of international autonomy for certain “rebellions”. But besides this, we should also consider a symbolic disinterest of the South for the South, the inferiorization of the South from the perspective of the other Souths. This reason is clearly articulated with the previous ones and is possibly the most difficult to overcome. Peripheral societies, political leaders, and intellectualities are under the impact of what is produced in the center. They largely ignore each other, “are isolated from each other and look at each other under the watchful eyes of the central countries”<sup>13</sup>. This is evident “when it is verified the scarcity and even the inexistence of national studies of a peripheral country on aspects of another, even of its neighbors (...). On the other hand, it is notorious the permanent effort of the central countries to study the periphery and to formulate their own visions about it”<sup>14</sup> – which are absorbed by the periphery

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<sup>12</sup> Rostow, 1960.

<sup>13</sup> Guimarães, 1999, P. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Id.

itself. We can remember here that in a large measure, the South is an “invention” of the North, in the same way that Mudimbe observed that Africa is an invention of Europe. It is an epistemological invention, but a very concrete one too – as observed in the classical formulation of Walter Rodney’s on *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (1972). Before “South”, we had “Orient”, “underdevelopment”, Third World, “dependence” and so on.

In any case, we can identify some years after World War II the first formulations around cooperation between “developing” countries themselves, as a counterpoint or complementarity to the cooperation between “developed” and “developing” countries. The Bandung Conference introduced the notion in its final declaration by advocating the “stimulation of mutual interests and cooperation” among its signatories<sup>15</sup>. One can consider the Conference as the foundational of the rapprochement and cooperation between actors from the periphery of the international system: «The central issue discussed in Bandung aimed to influence the mentalities of the ruling elites in Third World countries, many of them recently emancipated, to put aside their differences in favor of a common platform to denounce the calamities of colonialism. These are the first steps of political cooperation between countries with similar characteristics, inserted in the periphery of the international system. Moreover, some diplomatic and geopolitical postures of balanced distance in relation to the two superpowers also resulted from these first steps»<sup>16</sup>.

The foundation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in 1961, at the Belgrade Conference, contributed to the expansion of the debate among the “developing” countries – now defined as “non-aligned” to the two superpowers USA and USSR. In the search for alternative theoretical formulations, the Third Conference of the Movement, held in Lusaka in 1970, took up the concept of “collective self-reliance” as a goal for the countries of the bloc, transposing into the international arena the notion of “self-reliance” (self-

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<sup>15</sup> Amin, 2015; Santos, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Milani, 2012, P. 226.

sufficiency and self-development, in economical, symbolical, and cultural terms) formulated by then Tanzanian president Nyerere<sup>17</sup>.

Likewise, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (later converted into the G-77) was nourished by the formulations of the ECLAC and Dependency Theory schools, adopting the notions of “center” and “periphery”, and “dependency” – a thesis that would continue to inform part of the formulations around Global South and South-South Cooperation until now. The assumption that justifies this cooperation modality continues to be “that developing countries can and should cooperate to solve their own political, economic and social problems based on shared identities (former colonies, economic status, historical experience, etc.), common efforts, interdependence, and reciprocity”<sup>18</sup>.

This process constituted a new identity: of a “Third World”, gathering countries that had in common their colonial past, their characterization as “underdeveloped” or “developing”, and their pretension of autonomy in relation to a capitalist “First World” and a “real” or “actually existing socialism” “Second World”. Pressure from this numerical majority bloc in the United Nations General Assembly led to several initiatives to foster cooperation among “developing” countries within the United Nations throughout the 1970s. This effort culminated in the creation of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and the organization of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (Buenos Aires, 1978), which elaborated the Buenos Aires Plan of Action to define and guide those activities pretended to be based on reciprocity and horizontality.

It is in this context that the term “South-South Cooperation” began to be elaborated and to enter in circulation at the epistemic community of International Politics and between international agents and staffs. In principle, it is possible to locate precisely in 1978 the first written reference to the concept, by the Argentinian economist Graciela Chichilnisky. In the following years, the term slowly gained prominence, progressively replacing the notion of

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<sup>17</sup> Nyerere, 1973.

<sup>18</sup> Milani, 2012, P. 227.

“cooperation among developing countries”. Fundamental to this was the adoption of the idea of a “Global South” as a concept to encompass or overcome the notions of “underdevelopment”, “Third World”, “non-alignment”, or “periphery”. And, as we have seen, the strengthening of its conceptual counterpart (the other pole of the dichotomy), the idea of a “Global North”, was dialectically central to its expansion. For the assumption of the notion of a “North”, we already mentioned the “Brandt Commission” and the publication of its report in 1980. For the idea of a “South”, we highlighted the South Commission and the publication of its report in 1990 (explicitly adopting the concept of “South-South Cooperation”).

It is curious to note that, while the notion was progressively being imposed, its practice was considerably restricted, in the context of advancing neoliberalism and overcoming the socialism/capitalism bipolarity. It was only between the late 1990s and early 2000s that a significant revival of the concept and its practices occurred. This was guided by the resumption of intellectual debate in the now-called South around new development strategies, the democratization of the international system, and “progressive” projects and their governments, in particular, those of the so-called Latin American Left Turn or “pink tide”<sup>19</sup> – with one example of these moves being Brazil’s rapprochement with South American, African, and “BRICS” countries (then Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) during the two first terms of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010).

Efforts made in the 2000s and first years of the 2010s by several “pink tide” governments also advanced towards greater integration in Latin America and particularly in South America, by deepening the institutions of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) and creating spaces such as the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America [Nuestra América] (Alba, an initiative of “chavista” Venezuela). These institutions have sought to foster some cooperation projects among their members, such as the exchange of Venezuelan oil for human resources, particularly health care by Cuba. However, there

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<sup>19</sup> Pereira da Silva, 2019.



is considerable criticism among experts about the effectiveness of these initiatives, the regional hegemonic interests involved, as well as their reproduction over time<sup>20</sup>.

Thus, “the denomination has gained strength in the epistemic community of international development cooperation in recent years”<sup>21</sup>. However, the notion seems to have lost part of its original content (of autonomy, self-sufficiency, search for alternative projects to capitalism), focusing in recent years on the increase of South-South trade flows, infrastructure investments, and the power strategies of the so-called “emerging countries”. This movement has occurred notably from the initiative of the new emergent international power China, about which one could question to what extent or in what sense it could still be understood as a peripheral country or part of the South. But also, at some point, from the other “BRICS” – in their respective areas of influence.

### Conclusion

It can be observed that, at some level, the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist energy present at the Bandung Conference is still alive in South-South initiatives – but at a low profile. One can also notice a certain retreat in South-South Cooperation and integration initiatives since the global economic crisis that started at the end of the 2000s, the “Arab Spring” in North Africa and the Middle East, the decline of the Latin American “pink tide” during the 2010s, the disorganization of the international system aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine War and now the growing of the Middle East conflicts, among other factors. But it is hoped that, from the successive crises, new alternative initiatives may emerge that will evoke the “Spirit of Bandung”, ever available in a global system crossed by structural inequalities.

We have seen that the concept of Global South (derived from the North/South polarity) is one possibility among others. Global South seems to be the most widely accepted concept today, having been

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<sup>20</sup> Benzi, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Pino, 2014, P. 57.

imposed since the 1990s (and mainly the 2000s) over notions such as “peripheral world”, “Third World” or “non-aligned”, “underdeveloped” or “developing”, among many others. In some sense, the notion can be seen as a “meta-category”, integrating several analytical dimensions, not being restricted to the economic or geopolitical – but also as a highly polysemic and (maybe) exhausted concept. Of course, its use should not be taken without reflection, and should not imply a homogenization of the regions that can fit into the concept. It would be better to think in “Souths” (Sures) and consider the dimension of conflict in your interior.

But more than think in Souths, we can reconsider ideas as center/periphery and dependency. These are definitions more historical, economic/social – more structuralist. These are explicitly relational ones, at the core of these concepts, even in an etymological sense: the periphery exists in relation and in consequence of the center, one was underdeveloped by the other. This is not evident at all with the vaguely geographical notions of North and South. We know that these notions are not simply geographical, are geopolitical ones: there are “norths” in the south of the globe and “souths” in the north of the globe, and we have “norths” in the interior of the societies of the South and “souths” in the interior of the societies of the North. But the geographical origin of these concepts causes a huge confusion – to understand this we can simply mention these ideas in a first-period class of students at our universities.

Finally, I expect that this article has succeeded in emphasizing the historicity of the concepts of “North-South” in the international arena, of a “Global South” and hence of “South-South Cooperation”. The idea of a South – and before that of an Orient, underdeveloped countries, a Third World, a dependent region, or the colonized, or the “wretched of the Earth”<sup>22</sup> – as an identity is central because it is this that allows the argument of possible cooperation between the weakest links in the system. And we saw that supranational identities like that are floating, and partially depend on the initiatives of the “North”. They are creations (no matter if truths or fakes, this is not the point), basically creations of scholars, politicians, and offic-

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<sup>22</sup> Fanon, 1966.

ers. In short, they are historical and under dispute – never given, obvious, or essential. Hence, “cooperation” between the different “Souths” is possible, but not evident or automatic, and its terms and actors (even the name of this supranational identity) are always under discussion.

A key issue, for us who are intellectuals trained and producing in the “South”, is to be able to locate common ground for conversations and exchanges between us, which is also a form of “South-South cooperation”, hopefully, more horizontal than the one we observe between states<sup>23</sup>. The (geo)political concepts that are directly connected to the peripheral disjunctive, such as North/South, center/periphery, First World/Third World, development/underdevelopment, Global South, or South-South cooperation must still play a role. They are motivators for our meetings and joint initiatives. Notions such as that of “epistemic dependence” formulated by Fernanda Beigel<sup>24</sup>, that of “abyssal thinking” by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses<sup>25</sup>, or that of “peripheral thinking”, which attempts to describe the most important dilemma faced by the intelligentsia of the regions of the South<sup>26</sup>, call for efforts to overcome epistemicide and to democratize and pluralize the production of knowledge. These notions radically break with essentialist and Eurocentric distinctions such as East and West, or with differentiations that emphasize diverse religious and ethnic trajectories, which contribute more to dividing than to enabling encounters between the South.

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<sup>23</sup> Devés, Pereira da Silva, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Beigel, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Santos, Meneses, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Devés, op. cit.

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